THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

BENGALURU • FRIDAY • FEBRUARY 20, 2026 • ₹9.00 • PAGES 44 • LATE CITY EDITION

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UK POLICE ARREST KING CHARLES' BROTHER IN 'MISCONDUCT' PROBE

Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor was arrested by UK police on Thursday for misconduct in public office following revelations from Epstein files

ACCUSED OF FORWARDING GOVT REPORTS

According to the Epstein emails release, Andrew was accused of forwarding government reports from official visits to the American sex offender and financier, who died in a New York prison in August 2019. As Duke of York, Andrew, 66, had served as UK's trade envoy between 2001 and 2011, travelling globally and having privileged access to government

NO ONE IS ABOVE THE LAW, SAYS BRITISH PM

- British Prime Minister Keir Starmer issued a statement after Andrew's arrest stating that there is no individual who is placed above the law
- Once a high-flyer, Andrew had been stripped of all his royal titles of Prince and Duke of York by the King last year. In several news bytes to press, he has consistently denied any wrongdoing | P14

2011

WHEN ANDREW WAS JAILED FOR 11 MONTHS OVER EPSTEIN LINKS

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SC slams states over freebies ahead of polls

SUCHITRA KALYAN MOHANTY @ New Delhi

THE Supreme Court on Thursday slammed the freebies and subsidies culture ahead of elections and said it was "high time" to revisit such policies that hamper the country's economic development.

Observing that the ultimate financial burden of such populist measures falls on taxpayers, a bench headed by Chief Justice Surya Kant said, "But this money which the State says it will pay now... Who will pay for it? This is taxpayers' money."

The observations were made during the hearing of a petition filed by the Tamil Nadu Power Distribution Corporation Limited which proposed to give free electricity to all consumers irrespective of paying capacity.

"It is understandable when some people cannot afford, you have to provide. But the persons who ... are affluent ... is it not high time to revisit these policy frameworks?" the CJI asked.

The bench, also comprising justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi, said state governments should generate employment, make roads and hospitals instead of freebies.

Need democratised and human-centric AI: Modi

PM says India does not fear AI but sees future and fortune in it

RAKESH KUMAR @ New Delhi

ARTIFICIAL intelligence (AI) must be democratised and should serve as a medium of inclusion and empowerment, especially in the Global South, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday.

Speaking at the formal opening ceremony of the India AI Impact Summit 2026 here, Modi said some countries think AI should be developed in a confidential manner but India believes the codes should be shared for the common good.

As for the potential job disruptions, Modi said AI will also create new employment avenues, though it is difficult to predict what kinds of jobs will emerge. He observed that there are two kinds of people—those who fear AI and those who see future in it.

Stressing that India does not fear AI, Modi unveiled the MANAV vision for AI, where M stands for moral and ethical systems, A for accountable governance, N for national sovereignty, A for accessible and inclusive, and V for valid and legitimate.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Google CEO Sundar Pichai, OpenAI CEO Sam Altman and others during the India AI Impact Summit 2026 | PTI

RIL to invest ₹10L cr in AI over seven yrs

Reliance Industries chairman Mukesh Ambani announced a ₹10 lakh crore investment in AI over the next seven years to connect every Indian citizen, business, and government service to AI

He further said that AI will open higher-value, creative, and meaningful roles for more people, creating opportunities for innovation, entrepreneurship, and new industries. "AI will make work smarter, more efficient, and more impactful, enabling better design, faster building, and improved decision-making," said Modi.

The event was attended by AI leaders including OpenAI CEO Sam Altman, Google CEO Sundar Pichai, RIL chairman Mukesh Ambani, Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei, Microsoft's Brad Smith, Google DeepMind CEO Demis Hassabis, Accenture CEO Julie Sweet, and Meta's Alexandr Wang, among others. P11,15

India set to join Pax Silica today

JAYANTH JACOB @ New Delhi

INDIA is set to join US-led strategic alliance Pax Silica on Friday, marking a major step in New Delhi's evolving technology and economic partnership with Washington.

Sources said India's entry into the initiative, which is aimed at building resilient supply chains for critical minerals and AI, is expected to be formalised at the India AI Impact Summit.

Launched in December 2025, Pax Silica seeks to establish a secure, innovation-driven ecosystem from raw materials and critical minerals to semiconductors and AI infrastructure.

US Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs Jacob Helberg is currently in India and is expected to attend the formalisation event on Friday alongside senior Indian officials and US Ambassador to India Sergio Gor.

As a member of the BRICS grouping, India's decision to align with a US-led economic security framework is strategically significant.

Current members of Pax Silica include Australia, Greece, Israel, Japan, Qatar, South Korea, Singapore, UAE, and UK. India's entry into Pax Silica signals a sharpening focus on technology-led economic security and a recalibration of its strategic alignments amid intensifying global competition over AI and critical resources.

PWD min: 'Commission' in govt contracts will continue

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Belagavi

IGNITING a debate over transparency in public contracting, Public Works Department Minister Satish Jarkiholi said the practice of offering "commissions" for government works "existed earlier, exists now and will continue in the future".

Responding to allegations that contractors pay commissions to secure government projects, the minister told reporters that the issue would be difficult to eliminate entirely.

He blamed the previous BJP government for the current financial burden faced by infrastructure departments.

Jarkiholi revealed that there was nearly Rs 12,000 crore in pending dues in his department when the present government assumed office. While Rs 3,000 crore has already been cleared, payments worth Rs 9,000 crore are still pending.

"Development works cannot be stopped. Contractors naturally participate in tenders where they feel comfortable," he said. CONTINUED ON: P4

EXPRESS READ

350-km 'green wall' to check desertification

Bengaluru: The Karnataka State Policy and Planning Commission has recommended that the state government construct a 350-km 'green wall' in North Karnataka, from Belagavi to Bidar, covering five districts to check expansion of desertification | P4

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